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Personal Narratives

SEVENTH SERIES, No. 6

Campaign of Battery D, First Rhode Island Light Artillery, in Kentucky and East Tennessee

By EZRA K. PARKER,
[Late First Lieutenant Battery E,
First Rhode Island Light Artillery]



FIRST LIEUT. EZRA K. PARKER

(Picture taken June, 1908.)

PERSONAL NARRATIVES
OF EVENTS IN THE
WAR OF THE REBELLION,
BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE
RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

SEVENTH SERIES No. 6.

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CAMPAIGN OF BATTERY D, FIRST RHODE ISLAND
LIGHT ARTILLERY, IN KENTUCKY
AND EAST TENNESSEE.

In March, 1863, Gen. A. E. Burnside, having been relieved at his own request of the command of the Army of the Potomac, was soon afterwards assigned to the Department of the Ohio. Upon his special request, the Ninth Army Corps was also detailed for service in this department, and at once preparations were made for the transportation of the corps from Virginia to Kentucky. Battery D, First Rhode Island Light Artillery, Capt. William W. Buckley, was at that time attached to the Ninth Corps and was sent with its corps to the west. This battery had been at the beginning of its service attached to the first division of the Army of the Potomac, and when the army was divided into army corps, this battery was included in the first corps commanded by General McDowell. Its first active service was in the short and successful campaign to Fredericksburg, in

April and May, 1862. Then it went through the campaign of the Army of Virginia, under Gen. John Pope, losing heavily at the battle of the second Manassas, then again under General McClellan, in his successful campaign of South Mountain and Antietam. Meantime, General McDowell had been succeeded by General Hooker in the command of the First Army Corps. It was in the Fredericksburg campaign under Burnside, and was by his order transferred from the First to the Ninth Army Corps. After a not unpleasant march, both by rail and steamboat, the battery reached Lexington, Ky., on March 30th, 1863, and went into camp on the Fair grounds. Here it remained but a week, and then the line of march was taken up for camp Dick Robinson. On the 26th, the battery began its march from camp Dick Robinson to Somerset, near the Cumberland river, completing it on the 7th of May, 1863, and there it remained until the 7th of June. It was now expected that within a few days the march for East Tennessee would commence. Although we, members of the battery, well knew that the campaign would be arduous and full of dangers,

still we were all anxious to advance. In consequence of orders to General Burnside to send a part of his command to Vicksburg to assist General Grant, and in consequence of the raid of Gen. John Morgan, it was not until the 21st of August, 1863, that the expedition started. The Twenty-third Army Corps was the only corps that commenced at that date the march over the Cumberland river and mountains. General Hartzuff commanded the corps, consisting of three divisions commanded by Generals White, Hascall and Carter, respectively. We were attached to Gen. Hascall's division, and marched with our division by way of Stanford, Crab Orchard and Cub Creek to the Cumberland river. The Ninth Corps was reported to be at Cincinnati and to follow close upon the tracks of the Twenty-third Corps. The strength of the Twenty-third Corps was, perhaps, 15,000 or 20,000 men of all arms.

The march over the Cumberland mountains was full of adventures and labors. It would require a much longer paper than this to describe the many incidents that befell us on that famous march. We had no snow nor ice to encounter, but otherwise I

doubt whether or not Napoleon's crossing of the Alps was more fraught with dangers and hardships than was this crossing of the Cumberland mountains by the Army of the Ohio. On the 4th of September, 1863, we arrived upon the bluffs of the Tennessee river, opposite Loudon. Here we remained, recuperating, until the 15th of September. The enemy had hurriedly retreated upon our arrival at Loudon, leaving horses, mules and beef cattle, which we duly appropriated to our own use. A large amount of wheat and corn was found in the possession of the farmers, which was seized by the quartermasters. A steam flour-mill was found in good condition and was employed in grinding up the wheat and corn. We supplemented our rations with chicken and fresh pork while we were encamped at Loudon. We were on the main line of railway from Virginia to the South-western states. In their retreat from Loudon, the enemy had burned the bridge across the Tennessee at that point. It was several days before we were able to place across the river a pontoon bridge. From the south, in the direction of Chattanooga, Gen. N. B. Forrest often threatened us. From the

north, a General Jones was daily reported to be advancing down the valley of the Holston upon Knoxville. About the time that our battery arrived at Loudon, Gen. Burnside made a public entry into Knoxville. General Burnside was not a little disappointed in not having with him the Ninth Army Corps as early as he expected. The corps had been transported from Vicksburg (after having done excellent service before that city and also at Jackson) to Cincinnati, Ohio. In consequence of the great heat at Vicksburg and of the arduous service required of the corps, nearly 50 per cent of the men were sick with dysentery and ague. They were sent into Kentucky as soon as possible to find a healthy camp for a few weeks. Crab Orchard was the place selected for the camp on account of its medicinal springs and salubrious surroundings.

On Sept. 25th, 1863, the first division of the Ninth Army Corps arrived at Knoxville, after being subjected to long, fatiguing marches over bad roads by way of Cumberland Gap and Morristown. Our repose at Loudon was broken by orders to place knapsacks and the ammunition chests of the caissons

upon flat cars in order to expedite a contemplated forced march. The railroad from Loudon was in operation to a point up the Holston valley beyond Knoxville. The order to move was received upon the 15th inst. We made camp on the night of the 15th near Knoxville, about thirty miles from Loudon. On the 16th we advanced to Strawberry Plains, and on the 17th to New Market. We remained in New Market two days, and then received orders to counter-march to Loudon. We had been absent about a week, and had covered in all about 200 miles. The cause of this rapid movement from Loudon to New Market was a rumored attack by the enemy upon our forces in southwestern Virginia. The cause of our return was a dispatch from General Halleck to General Burnside, notifying him that two divisions of General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia had been sent to reinforce General Bragg, and he desired him, General Burnside, to go to General Rosecrans' aid as soon as possible.

On the 23rd of September our battery crossed the Tennessee at Loudon by the aid of a single flat boat large enough to take over only one team and carriage

at a time. It took all day and most of the night to effect the crossing. Soon after crossing, we took up the march for Sweetwater, a station sixteen miles south from Loudon, on the east Tennessee and Georgia railroad. We had no sooner arrived at Sweetwater than we were ordered to countermarch, and away we went back to Loudon. On our arrival there, we were ordered into a rebel fort to the right of the village facing south. This hill was in a bend of the river. A pontoon bridge had been laid across the river and troops of all arms were continually crossing to the south bank. There strong lines of battle were formed, and in expectation of a severe conflict, we awaited the approach of General Forrest, who was steadily driving back our cavalry and mounted infantry upon Loudon. We were all anxious for a brush with the famous General Forrest, and had he assailed our position he would have met with a hot reception. This was the 28th of September, 1863.

Forrest was reported to be advancing with a large mounted force, estimated by citizens and negroes from 3,000 to 15,000 men. We supposed that on the

morning of the 29th we would have a royal battle on the banks of the Tennessee. But day dawned and no attack was delivered, and soon word came from our mounted force that Forrest had commenced his retreat down the valley during the night, while we were watering and feeding our horses and mules and inspecting ammunition. From October 1st to the 5th, we were busy collecting forage. In our wagons, and carefully covered by the forage, were carcasses of hogs and sheep. Our company cooks served up rations which could only be fully appreciated by eating. Men, horses and mules were growing fat, sleek and handsome.

On the 6th of October, we received orders to report to our first division of the Ninth Army Corps at Blue Springs, in the valley of the Holston, distant about ninety-eight miles from Loudon. The enemy were reported to be threatening our communications with Cumberland Gap, and the Ninth Corps had been ordered to prevent all interference with this line. The infantry were transported by rail, but the battery was sent forward on foot. In order that the battery should arrive as soon as possible after the infantry

it was forced along at the rate of about thirty miles per day. We found the roads in very fair condition. At dark, on the 9th, we arrived at Bull Gap, a gorge in one of those spur ranges of mountains that extend out from the main chain, and which, at a distance, resembles somewhat a large windrow of hay. On the next day we passed through the gap and soon came up with our division, posted in lines of battle along Lick Creek.

Our arrival was duly reported and we were ordered to hold ourselves ready to take position and open upon the enemy. Here we found General Burnside, and he gave us a hearty greeting, calling us his Rhode Island boys. We responded sincerely and vociferously. Soon after this the general gave the order for our line to advance, as the enemy made no diversion against us. Someone facetiously said that probably the general had waited for our battery before he ordered the attack. We replied to such remarks by retorting that this showed the general's good judgment. A Colonel Foster was in command of a brigade of cavalry, and General Burnside sent him around by the enemy's right flank to seize and hold

his lines of retreat. As soon as it was probable that Colonel Foster had reached the desired position, a charge was made upon the enemy's position. A sharp and hotly contested fight ensued. We drove the enemy from his position about dark. We here formed a new line and lay upon our arms for a renewal of the fight at dawn. The advance was duly made, but the enemy had fled, and Colonel Foster, as it usually happens in such cases, had not got into position to intercept them. Our battery had been in position all day, but was not called upon at all until about dark to fire a few shots at a battery of the enemy that soon withdrew. We pursued the enemy twenty miles up the valley. At noon, we passed through the village of Greenville, and read the sign over a building, with the simple legend, "A. Johnson, Tailor." A mile beyond Rhea Town we went into camp. On the 12th, the cavalry reported the enemy to be so scattered that further pursuit was useless. On the next day, we started back for Knoxville, and arrived there on the 16th of October, 1863. From London to Rhea Town, and from Rhea Town to Knoxville, made a distance of 226 miles, a daily av-

erage of a little more than 22 miles. For two days we lay at Knoxville.

On the 20th, we marched again for Loudon. We camped that night at Campbell's Station, seventeen miles from Knoxville. We next encamped at Lenoir's Station. This was a very large plantation owned by a Dr. Lenoir. Its lands were very extensive and beautifully situated. The village consisted of a railroad station, the owner's mansion, large farm buildings, yarn factory, houses for overseers and a hundred or more cabins for his slaves. He, the doctor, was a large slave owner, and a violent rebel. He had extensive fields of maize; one of which was estimated to be four miles in length. The width was considerably less. Most of the corn was as high as a man could reach on horseback.

On October 22nd, we marched to Loudon and crossed the river. The village of Loudon is on the left bank of the Tennessee. Soon after the retreat of General Forrest, referred to above, the writer was detailed to open a recruiting office in the village of Loudon, as our several batteries were all short of men. I duly opened the office in a small building

contiguous to a hotel owned by a Mr. Hoss, called by our men "The old hoss." I had two men with me, one a corporal, I appointed clerk; the other man acted as guard and orderly. Handbills were printed and distributed in the vicinity, and on the morning of the second day, as I looked out of the office, I had an idea that a large squadron of cavalry was drawn up before the hotel. The men were thin and lanky, also their horses were the same. All carried guns, some double barrel shotguns; some ancient rifles, and a few modern carbines. I remained in my office, and soon two of the riders dismounted and presented themselves before the guard, who, with drawn saber and revolver in belt, upheld the dignity of the United States Government in the eyes of these horsemen. The United States flag was duly floating in the morning air, and all around were nailed the handbills asking for recruits for the U. S. Volunteer Military service. The men who dismounted represented the whole squad. They inquired of the guard if they could "jine" the Union army, and the guard referred them to me for an answer. They came inside and said "Howdy." I responded by a dignified nod of the

head. I at once entered upon business, and told them the conditions upon which they could become Uncle Samuel's volunteer soldiers. I stated that I would call a surgeon in order to ascertain if they were physically qualified to enlist. I asked them what they proposed to do with their horses, suggesting that if they were serviceable, they would be bought for our service. They then said that they came from the mountains that lay partly in North Carolina and partly in Tennessee; that they wanted to keep their horses and go home upon them once a week. I explained that if they enlisted in our service they could go home only at times when furloughs might be granted them, and that meantime they would be expected to be in camp or with their commands at all times, day and night. This they said they could not agree to. They would be ready at any time to a fight, if their services were required, and this they thought was all that should be required of them. Under such conditions, it is evident that the fifty or more mountaineers did not enlist. This ceremony took place on each of the two or three following days, and I tired of this service.

I did not secure a single recruit, and when our battery was ordered to Blue Springs, I was only too pleased to turn over the office to a captain of infantry, who was as successful recruiting as I had been. Another little episode happened to me just before I entered upon the recruiting service. It became necessary for Captain Buckley to send to Knoxville a commissioned officer to report to General Burnside. Our pickets extended about two miles out from Loudon towards Knoxville, and from Knoxville toward Loudon about the same distance. The railroad was not in use at that time, so it was necessary to make the twenty-six miles outside of our lines.

It was about four p. m., when I learned from the captain that I was the favored officer to report at Knoxville. It was suggested that I need not start until dawn next morning, still I was at liberty to leave at once. I considered the matter a moment and decided to leave that day at dark. There was no moon, but it had all the indications of a bright starlight night. I had my best horse, a thoroughbred Kentuckian, fed at once. I took my sabre and revolver, with a light lunch, and at dark I quietly left

camp for my ride to Knoxville. The road to Knoxville was direct and plain. Nearly half the distance it passed through woodland, with but little underbrush. I decided, as the country outside of our lines was infested with rebel scouts and guerillas, to ride rapidly through the open country, but to walk through the wooded part, as it was so dark there that I could not see. If I walked, I could use the sense of hearing, and so be warned of the approach of either friend or foe. Should I hear advancing steps, I could easily ride out of the road into the woods out of sight, as there were no fences that bordered the road. I met with little adventure. Once, just as I was passing a farmhouse, a voice in the rear, near the house, called out in a loud tone, "halt." I did not obey the order, but touched lightly the flank of my thoroughbred with my spur and he left the house behind like the wind. Two or three times I thought I heard approaching footsteps in the woodland, and I rode a few rods out of the road and waited for a few minutes in expectation, but it proved to be all imagination, and I returned to the road, scratching my face more or less in the branches of the trees.

I had calculated that I could make the ride of thirty miles in about four hours, but in consequence of the slow progress through the woods, it took me much longer, and it was some time after midnight that I discovered several hundred yards ahead of me a fire just outside of the road, partly screened by bushes. I knew that it ought to be a Union picket thrown out by our troops in Knoxville, but I deemed it best to make sure. Most of the way on this road there were few stones, large or small. It was generally a dry loam, and hence a horse though shod, upon the walk would make but little noise. I walked along slowly upon one side of the road towards the fire, ready to turn and race down the road if it should be necessary for my safety. Some additional fuel was cast upon the fire, and it lighted up so that I could distinguish a soldier in our uniform, and I at once went boldly forward. I soon was observed by our picket and duly challenged. After I had given the countersign and shown my pass to the officer in command, I was taken to the picket station and well entertained. Early in the day I reported to General Burnside. When I was about to leave, he questioned

me about my journey from Loudon, and instructed me to return with a column that would leave for Loudon that afternoon. I returned to our camp the next day about 2 p. m., in fair condition.

On October 29th, our battery was parked near Lenoir's Station, on the edge of a fine grove of pine trees. Here we were informed that our winter quarters would be. Our men at once entered upon the construction of log cabins for the command, as well as stables for our animals. This work went rapidly forward, as the pine woods furnished ready and ample material. We also utilized a large barn built of weather beaten boards which stood near our camp. The boards furnished floors for the cabins and roofs for our stables. The roofs of the cabins were covered with paulines. By the 13th of November, the camp was completed and we all looked forward for a pleasant time during the approaching winter.

The scientists of the battery had captured a still on one of their foraging expeditions, and in a week or so more the intention was to furnish a liberal supply of pure whiskey at moderate prices. But "man proposes and God disposes," and on the morning of

the 14th, our short, sweet dream of cosy winter quarters was broken. Soon after reveillé, before the men had fallen into line for roll call, there was the sound of heavy artillery firing at Loudon. We proceeded with the regular camp duties and at the usual time ate our breakfast. Soon we learned the news. General Longstreet, of the Army of Northern Virginia, with his famous corps which had done good service for the rebel arms at Chickamauga, had been sent by General Bragg from Chattanooga to capture Burnside and to clean out the Tennessee and Holston valleys from Southern Tennessee to the southern boundary of Virginia. The veterans of Longstreet had been told that some 15,000 raw troops were scattered from Loudon to Knoxville, who would retreat in confusion at the first appearance of General Longstreet.

It seems that it was not generally known that the Ninth Corps had arrived in the valley. The rebels attempted to lay down a pontoon bridge at Hough's Ferry, a short distance below Loudon. The troops sent to oppose the crossing were from both the Ninth and Twenty-third Corps. The enemy was not a little surprised at the successful resistance which our

troops made to his advance. He was held all day from advancing from the river, and the opinion was that Longstreet would be defeated on the morrow. General Grant had requested General Burnside to maintain himself for a short time, until he, Grant, could fight the battle of Missionary Ridge; then he would promptly send him assistance. General Burnside, it seems, was so confident that he could hold his own with Longstreet, that he proposed to allow Longstreet to cross the Tennessee so that it would not be possible for him to return to General Bragg in time to aid him in the coming fight.

So, on the night of the 14th, it was decided to fall back, and on the 15th General Burnside gave orders to retreat slowly as far as Lenoir's. Our battery remained in camp all this time, ready to move. It was not until 5 p. m., on the 15th, that we began to move on the main road to Campbell's station. This night march was the most horrid of all my nearly four years' experience in the United States Army. Language will fail to do it justice. I was chief of the left section and brought up the rear, or was supposed to. It had rained for twenty-four hours and

the frost was about all out of the ground. The soil was a rich clay, two or three feet in depth. Our horses were not very strong, and after they had dragged the guns and caissons about a mile, their strength was gone.

I was instructed to retreat slowly and in case our rear guard, composed of infantry and cavalry, should find it necessary to make a stand, I was to go into battery. The right and center sections had gone far ahead of me, as the road was not cut up so bad for them, and it literally seemed, in the language of the poet Horace, that the "Devil would take the hindmost." After the first mile we came to a long, deep bed of sticky mud. I rode in advance, and found that about a half mile ahead there was a little knoll of cleared land, comparatively dry, and skirted by a high, worm fence of good oak rails. So I went back and ordered an advance. By pushing hard, we were able to move our tired teams. Before we had made 200 yards, we were stalled. Then we all, non-commissioned officers, privates and myself, put our shoulders to the wheels and made another 200 yards. We were all wet inside by sweat and outside by mud

and water. Never have I seen men do better. At last, somehow, near morning, we reached the knoll, a mile and a half from camp, physically used up. The caissons in front with guns to the rear, we drew up by the roadside and replenished the smouldering fires with rails. Our horses, poor things, were reeling, scarcely able to stand under the weight of their harness.

One of the buglers had been detailed to accompany me, and I sent him forward to report to the captain our condition and to ask for orders. Meantime, the colonel in command of the rear guard sent word that the rebel skirmishers were pressing him hard, and that he could not hold them back much longer. I roused the weary men and sent a sergeant to select an easier way through the fields. Before he reported, the bugler returned with orders from the captain to destroy and throw away my ammunition. I had never disobeyed an order, but in this case I knew that we had a short supply of ammunition for our 12-pound Napoleons in all the Tennessee valley; that guns without ammunition were useless, and so I hesitated. One round was thrown into the mud by a

corporal, who heard the report of the bugler to me. I immediately stopped further destruction and proceeded to place my pieces in battery for opening upon the advancing rebel lines, and I had asked our infantry to unmask our front so that we could have a clear field. I gave the order to "load with solid shot," and immediately my men were as active as ever under the excitement of a fight. Before the order was executed I heard my name called, and an officer reported to me with four fresh, 6-mule teams.

General Burnside had burned a large quartermaster's train in order to save his artillery and its ammunition. The arrival of the mules prevented the destruction of our ammunition and the skirmish which I had arranged. I was informed that I should make all haste, as General McLaw had been sent by the Kingston road to cut off our retreat. The two roads, one from Kingston and one from Loudon, intersected a mile south from Campbell's Station. The drivers unhitched their horses and were sent on ahead in order to be out of our way. As soon as the mules were attached to our guns and caissons, they were started, and away they went, through the deep

mud, up hill and down, until they passed safely the Kingston road about 10 A. M., and we parked in the open field with the rest of our battery.

A sharp fight took place at the junction of these roads, in which our people more than held their own. We made some coffee, ate a little corn bread, and all of us felt young again. My men and myself were still covered with mud. While our battery and its division were halted, columns of troops were rapidly moving forward and deploying north of the village of Campbell's Station. The position was this: Here was an opening in the woods about three miles long from north to south, and from a mile to a mile and a half in width. The south end was higher than the middle. From the middle to the north was quite a rise of from fifty to 100 feet, where was spread out a broad plateau, which commanded the whole open tract of land. The village was in the lowest part of the tract. Upon the plateau at the north, General Burnside was placing a portion of his troops, including three or four light batteries.

Our battery soon had orders to move, and on we went, followed closely by our rear guard, which it-

self was closely pursued by the rebels. Our front line of battle was partially in the village of Campbell's Station, protected very well by the buildings. Our battery did not halt until we arrived upon the plateau. Soon we were assigned a position to protect our extreme right and right flank. After getting into position, we had nothing to do but to observe the movement of the enemy. We soon beheld a splendid exhibition of war. The rebel skirmishers first appeared in the open, carefully examining the ground to find if we had a concealed line of battle near. They soon advanced a half mile or less and found no opposition. There they rested, and we soon saw the rebel columns debouch from both the Loudon and the Kingston roads. At last there came a battery of 20-pounder rifled guns, with several white horses, and went into position on the right of the road.

This battery we had often met in the East. It was one of the batteries of the Washington corps of artillery of New Orleans. This was an excellent battery. The enemy soon formed two strong lines of battle clear across the open country, about 200 yards apart. Light batteries came forward, halting in front, and

took positions between the brigades. On the flanks the cavalry was seen in the open woodland. This scene was all spread out before us. In all our great battles, such as Manassas and Antietam, we rarely saw more than a fourth of a mile of our enemy's line.

About 12 M., the signal was given, and the rebel lines, with flags flying and batteries firing, advanced against us. The fighting for the last forty-eight hours had evidently convinced Longstreet's veterans that they had worthy foes to meet. Four rifled batteries planted upon the brow of the hill, under General Burnside's personal directions, opened rapidly upon the enemy's lines of infantry, paying no attention apparently to the enemy's artillery fire. The very first discharge sent havoc into their first line and killed a color bearer. In five minutes their heavy lines were fearfully torn, but still closing up and keeping up a wonderful alignment they moved right on. To us spectators, it seemed that they would overwhelm our own lines of battle. The enemy had not stopped to fire a rifle, neither had our infantry discharged a piece. Suddenly a change came over the wonderful scene. The Twenty-third Corps opened

with terrific volleys, followed closely by the Ninth. The lines of the rebels halted, opened fire and sought such cover as the surface of the ground afforded them.

Soon the smoke of battle shut in the grand scene and we looked to our own commands. The Washington artillery began throwing over our way its twenty-pounder compliments. As the flank of our battery was nearly in line with the fire from the rebel battery, it seemed sometimes as if they would rake our whole front. Fortunately for us, they did little damage. Lieutenant Benjamin, chief of artillery, paid his special attention to the Washingtonians, and the result was that they were satisfied to keep quiet, one of their guns burst in full view, and this seemed to take their attention away from us.

Soon a regiment or two of the enemy were seen to pass to our extreme right under cover of the skirting woodland and into the wood. At once we were ordered to open fire upon this piece of woodland with shell and shrapnell. We sent twenty-five or thirty shells in rapid succession into the wood, and soon we saw the rebels going to their rear upon the run. It

seems that a portion of the Ninth Corps was in position to enfilade the rebel line, and after they had received a few volleys and our shells they beat a hasty retreat. During the remainder of the battle there was no further trouble on our right flank. This affair on our right flank convinced us that however strong mules were for drawing over heavy roads our artillery, they were not at all well behaved in battle. Of course, as soon as we opened upon the flanking rebels, several batteries of the enemy gave us special attention. The shells burst fast and furious all around us, but it did not interfere with our shelling the woods. I heard deep and loud profanity, and turning around saw my two mule teams start towards each other, and when they met they began to climb up each other.

We had extra men detailed from the infantry to help us manage the mules, and it was from our infantry friends that the loud talk came. After getting up in the air a good distance, the leading pairs of each team fell over. Underneath each was thrown a man. When the rebels retreated from the wood, we ceased firing and our cannoneers went to the assist

ance of the mule guards. One man was severely bruised, though no bones were broken. We had the mules taken out of the line of the enemy's fire and they soon quieted down. General Longstreet was present in command of his forces, reported to be 20,000 strong. Various assaults were made by him against our lines that November afternoon, but we repulsed them all with heavy loss to him. It was now nearly dark. The plan of General Burnside was to withdraw to Knoxville as soon as he could leave his lines in safety, under cover of night.

All the batteries went to the rear, except Benjamin's, and one section of Buckley's under my command. I was instructed to take orders from Lieutenant Benjamin and not withdraw until he so ordered. His battery was slowly and accurately firing and much annoying the rebel batteries. When it was so dark that one could not see twenty-five yards, he ordered me to withdraw and proceed as fast as possible to Knoxville, not waiting for him. I directed that my right or fifth piece should be first limbered up. The men in charge of the mules that hauled this piece attempted to drive them round to the trail, but

they made only a few steps and then planted their forward feet in the soft ground and stood firm as Gibraltar. The guns were about 100 yards front of them, and I soon decided that it would be easier to run our pieces back by hand than to attempt to move the mules. Men from our division came to our assistance, and we soon had the guns ready for marching.


My caissons, after having supplied from them the expended rounds of ammunition from my gun limbers, had been sent back with the rest of the battery, so that I had only my two guns to care for on my night retreat. My cannoneers were so tired that I allowed them to take turns in riding upon the limbers. This was our second night out and we were all thoroughly exhausted. For thirty hours the men had not slept and had partaken of but little food, mostly a small ration of corn bread. We were preceded by the rest of our battery in Knoxville. I reached Knoxville about 5 o'clock in the morning, and was directed to camp on the right of our two sections just in the rear of Fort Saunders.

There was an Ohio battery attached to the Twenty-

third Army Corps. We made the march with them from Kentucky, and we were not a little chagrined at the way these sons of Ohio overlapped us in foraging. We had no serious difficulty with this command, still we all felt that it was composed principally of the porcine element. When we went to the Ninth Corps we parted company with this battery with regrets, for we felt that we had not been able thus far to even up our accounts with them. This Ohio institution had seen no service except marching and camping. At Campbell's Station, it was in the front line of artillery, first on the left of the Knoxville road in a very prominent position. For a while it was rare fun for these men to rake the rebel lines, but when the rebel artillery opened upon this first line of our batteries, there was a most sudden change in the situation. The Ohioans had a man or two wounded and a caisson blown up. When the explosion occurred, the zeal of the men vanished, from officers and all. The captain limbered his battery to the rear, hauled out into the road and advanced toward Knoxville upon the trot. Whether he had orders to do so or not, we never knew. As

they passed along the road by our battery in position, our men joked them to their hearts' content. It was loudly said that they were after hogs, poultry and sheep. We all felt that Ohio had been settled with, and just as we wanted it to be done. Had this battery seen as much service as the Ninth Army Corps, they never would have done as they did.

We placed our guns in position, as before stated, in the rear and to the right of Fort Saunders. The drivers took care of the mules, and the cannoneers at once dropped upon the ground and slept until aroused to assist in fortifying our position. We were on a commanding ridge looking to the southwest. A section of our battery was to occupy embrasures in the fort. The other two sections were outside and to the right of the fort. This fort was an unfinished rebel earthwork, which commanded the Loudon road, and was named by them Fort Loudon. Col. Orlando Poe was the engineer in charge, and we soon had staked out for us works to be raised to protect our guns. As our men were so wearied out, it was difficult for them to accomplish much in the digging on this 17th of November, 1863, the day



of our arrival. Late in the day details of citizens came upon the ground, and before light the next morning we had excellent protection for our guns. It was reported that General Burnside had taken all males, irrespective of color or politics, and set them to work upon the fortifications around the city.

Knoxville then rested entirely upon an elevated plateau, skirting along the right bank of the Holston river, which is the main branch of the Tennessee. This plateau was divided into three portions by two creeks, named first and second creeks, respectively, from the north. Third creek was just south of our position at Fort Saunders. This name was given the fort about the 20th of November, in honor of Colonel Saunders, who was killed at Armstrong's House. This division of the plateau gave one the impression that the city was built upon three hills. On all prominent points strong works were erected, some of them enclosed. These forts were joined by strong rifle pits. Also there was an inner line of enclosed works. On the left or south bank were several knobs 200 or 300 feet in height. The river was crossed by a pontoon bridge. We had possession of the most

commanding knob, had a good road to its summit and it was well fortified.

We had a large mounted force which operated principally on the left bank of the river. Forage and other supplies were sent down the French Brood and Holston rivers. In fact, during the whole siege, we were never very much interfered with on the south side of the river opposite and above Knoxville. Our force was about 15,000, and that of General Longstreet's 20,000 men. On the 18th we, from Fort Saunders, witnessed a gallant fight for the possession of the Armstrong House, on the Loudon road, about a mile and a half from Saunders. This position was held by 2,000 or 3,000 of our mounted men, and it required the whole force of McLaw to capture the house.

As soon as our forces retreated down the road under cover of our works, the rebels immediately took possession of the house. Lieutenant Benjamin then made a beautiful shot, sending at the first trial a 20-pound shell into the house, setting it on fire. Had the rebels not extinguished the fire the house would have been burned down. On the 20th we erected a

flagstaff and sent up a flag in the fort. This created much enthusiasm all along our line. Our fortifications were greatly strengthened by bales of cotton, covered with green cattle hides. We felt by this time that we could easily hold our own against the enemy.

A house on the north side of the Loudon road, from which its owners had fled, was taken possession of by the enemy's sharpshooters. It was outside of our lines, but was near enough to our fort to cause us much annoyance. General Ferrero, who commanded this portion of the line, decided to capture the house in a night attack. This was made in the evening at 8 o'clock, so quietly and quickly that the enemy were surprised, and some surrendered and some ran away. The house was destroyed.

A little incident occurred in the fort at this time that I have never forgotten. I had held the view, with most others, that it is a matter of instinct for a person to jump or dodge if anything unexpected comes upon him through any one of the senses. Lieutenant S. N. Benjamin, the chief of artillery of the army, often reprimanded his men for dodging, and so did General Ferrero, and General Ferrero told a

story how a soldier was hit when he dodged; had he gone right along the bullet would have missed him. I had noticed Lieutenant Benjamin on several occasions under a warm fire, and he paid no attention to the whistling balls. On the night in question General Ferrero and staff and about every commissioned officer in the fort were standing inside Fort Saunders awaiting the advance of our Seventeenth Michigan regiment upon the house. We had waited several minutes after 8 o'clock, and began to wonder why the attack had not been made. Suddenly there came right at us a heavy volley from the house. This was so unexpected that down went General Ferrero, and Lieutenant Benjamin was almost prone upon the ground. My opinion is that all present dodged more or less, but none so low as the officers named.

On the 21st, Saturday, the work upon the fortifications still went steadily on. The garrison of Fort Saunders consisted principally of the Seventy-ninth New York Highlanders and Benjamin's and Buckley's batteries. Other infantry was close at hand, which could be called upon in an emergency. From the 21st to the 28th nothing unusual occurred. The

enemy seemed to be busy on the south side of the Holston occupying a high knob with artillery, but so far off that we gave it but little attention. With 24-pound howitzers they could nearly reach our own main line. Had he been able to capture the knob which our people had strongly fortified, it would have been very disastrous to us.

Nov. 28, 1863, opened cold and rainy. The outside of the parapet of Fort Saunders was coated with ice. From indications that all observed, it seemed that the assault upon our line was near at hand. The enemy seemed to be pushing troops toward the right of Fort Saunders, and were constantly attempting to force back our pickets in that locality. The location of the several guns of Battery D at 10 p. m., on the 28th, was as follows: the second and sixth pieces were in Battery Galpin, on second creek, enfilading the creek and railroad; the third, fourth and fifth in Fort Saunders, and the first in Battery Noble, on the left of the Loudon road. At 11 p. m., the rebels made a determined attack upon our lines from Battery Galpin to the river, and our battery did considerable firing. This movement of the enemy was

to drive in our pickets and to get as near our main line as possible.

We all knew that by daylight we should be attacked with all the fury which General Longstreet could command. Ammunition was brought up in extra rounds, ready for use. Nobody slept. General Burnside was visiting his troops, especially those in Fort Saunders. Two companies of the Twenty-ninth Massachusetts had been added to the infantry. His staff were all busy directing and encouraging the men. It was not until half past six o'clock on Sunday morning, Nov. 29, 1863, that a signal gun was fired from the enemy's battery on Armstrong's Hill. There was then a lively artillery fire opened from all the enemy's guns in position on both sides of the river. Our artillery made no reply. When the rebel artillery stopped firing we all knew that the assault would promptly follow. We were peering through the fog and smoke and darkness to see the advancing gray lines of the rebel infantry. We well knew that in a minute they might be upon us, as they had crowded up to within 200 yards of Fort Saunders.

In front of the fort telegraph wires had been wound round the stumps of trees lately cut down, and this wire, not being known to the enemy, threw them into much confusion. Lieutenant Benjamin's 20-pounders were not well adapted to the short range required to repel the assault, although they were as well served as any men could serve them, so that it devolved upon the three brass Napoleons of Battery D to do the effective work. As soon as the charging "columns by division closed en masse" of the enemy appeared, Battery D sent in to the columns double rounds of canister at fifty yards. The veterans of Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and Chickamauga began to quail. It was not possible for them to stand such an onslaught from big guns and rifles. Many fell from the deadly fire and others on account of contact with the entangling wire, but then in the fog and smoke, it was not possible to tell why it was that nearly every man in the first rank fell.

To those brave men it seemed death to advance or retreat, and by force of numbers they pushed on, and some got into the ditch in front of the fort, it being some eight feet deep and twelve feet wide; to the top

of the parapet was at least twenty feet, and the outside of the parapet was covered with smooth ice. When they gained the ditch they were sheltered from our fire. It was not an agreeable duty for our infantry to peer over the top of the parapet to shoot the rebels below, so Lieutenant Benjamin took a number of his shells, lighted the fuses and rolled them over the parapet into the ditch among the enemy. A half dozen explosions of these shells brought them to terms, and soon something as white as anything they had, was raised upon a ramrod. They were told to enter by a certain embrasure, leaving their arms in the ditch. They came along rapidly, about 300 of them, and were marched into Knoxville. The rest of the charging columns fell back, and the battle was at an end. Four brigades, consisting of nineteen regiments, from 4,000 to 6,000 men, were sent forward against Fort Saunders.

News soon came that General Grant had won a decisive victory at Chattanooga, and that General Sherman was rapidly coming to our relief. Joy reigned in Knoxville, and in all the hearts of the thousands of loyal people in East Tennessee.

APPENDIX.

INCIDENTS (PERSONAL).

At Campbell's Station Sergeant Gideon Spencer, of the fourth piece, had a close call. He was taking his piece from its position and passing along the Knoxville road. A high worm fence was standing by the side of the road and one of the slanting stakes in it hung out over the road so that the sergeant on horseback had to turn his head over to the right in order to avoid a collision. Just as he turned the head, a 20-pound shell came from the Washington artillery and cut off the stake, opposite the sergeant's head. In this case, dodging paid.

During the siege of Knoxville Private William Oakes was down in a ravine near the teams. A bullet fired from the rebel lines came over and passed through his head just above the tongue, carrying away two or three of his teeth. He was in a hospital a short distance away, and the next day after he was

wounded I went to see him. I found him with his cheeks swollen to an enormous size. I shook his hand and expressed my regret at his misfortune, and hoped that he would soon be out of the hospital, etc. I did not think that he could articulate. I saw that he was about to speak, or to attempt it, and so I leaned over to catch his words. He managed to say in a distressed voice that he was unable to eat popcorn. I thought that he would get back to Rhode Island, and told him so.

While lying with my section on the right of Fort Saunders, on a cold, wet day, the colonel commanding the brigade to which I was attached directed his quartermaster to furnish me with a tent. There was sent round an old sibley tent and my men pitched it a short distance in rear of the line, on a slightly elevated dry patch of ground. I went inside, but found that as the top of the tent was above our parapet, the rebels were shooting bullets through the top in a lively manner. I went outside and estimated about how low the shots could come through the tent. I made a mark on the inside, and those who happened to be in the tent kept heads below the line. The

colonel referred to this line as the dead line. A soldier brought to me a beautiful copy of the works of the Latin poet, Virgil, and I spent the time in reading his poetic account of the siege of "Lofty Illium."

On the morning of the great assault upon our lines, Sergeant Charles C. Gray was in charge of the fourth piece of our battery. He often loaded his piece with double canister and fired with terrible effect, for the range was only from fifteen yards to fifty yards. He moved his piece from its first position en barbette on the right of the fort, to an embrasure that more effectually commanded the rebel advance. Here he fired with great rapidity, until the enemy appeared to recoil. He had his gun loaded with double canister and ceased firing. At this time a rebel officer climbed out of the ditch, and standing at the muzzle of the cannon placed his sword upon it and said: "Surrender this gun." The man who held the lanyard was ready to fire, and asked for the order. Sergeant Gray replied: "Don't waste double canister on one man." At this juncture, three other rebels came into the embrasure at the muzzle of the gun, and then the order was given to "fire." Of these

four men, nothing was left but atoms. The brave sergeant was publicly thanked and congratulated by General Burnside a few hours later. The Governor of Rhode Island, at the general's request, sent him a commission as second lieutenant. This case is unique. Nothing but the stout heart of Sergeant Gray made him a commissioned officer. He owed his promotion to no political or personal influence with the Governor of Rhode Island.

Sergeant Frank Tucker, of Battery D, was a cool, brave man, and the best shot in the whole battery. Some 600 or 700 yards from our lines, just in the edge of a piece of woodland, a rebel sharpshooter, with a big target rifle that sent explosive bullets, had secreted himself in a pine tree. A number of men had been killed by him. General Ferrero had barely escaped a bullet through his head. The general sent for me, as my section was in position nearly opposite the sharpshooter, and requested me to open fire upon him. I stated that nothing would please me better, but as Lieutenant Benjamin had ordered me to waste no ammunition, I did not feel that he would permit me to open fire on one man. He gave

me a written order to proceed, and so I went back to my section to carry out the order. We placed a cap upon a ramrod and slowly raised it above our parapet. I looked through a field glass while the men looked with naked eyes. The cap had no sooner come above the parapet than a ball was put through it. We all saw the smoke about ten or fifteen feet from the ground. I directed Sergeant Tucker to load with solid shot, to take his time about computing distance, elevation of piece, and aiming it. When he had the gun ready, we once more raised the cap, and promptly the bullet came. The sergeant had his piece ready aimed and he quickly said "fire." The next I saw the pine tree break off and topple over, and down fell a man with his gun in his hand. Our men sent up a great shout. General Ferrero was delighted with such an exhibition of marksmanship. I noticed that as soon as the reb. struck the ground he jumped up and ran into the thicket to the rear of his tree. I said nothing about this, and it was understood that Tucker had dropped his man at the first fire.

CONFEDERATE
LOSS IN ASSAULT UPON FORT LOUDON,
ALIAS SAUNDERS ON NOVEMBER 29, 1863.

Killed, 129.	Wounded, 458.
Missing, 226.	Aggregate, 813.

See War of the Rebellion, Official Records, Vol. 31, Part I, page 475.

General Burnside makes Confederate total loss about 500.

See *Ibid* page 270.

Union entire loss about 20, *Ibid* page.

In the assault *upon* Fort Saunders, November 29, 1863, I do not find that Battery "D" suffered any loss.

E. K. PARKER.

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